

**Political History Collection
Interview H.0009.01 : Tape 1**

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Interviewed by: Melvyn Goldstein and Tashi Tsering
Name: Chape, Tsenden Phüntso [Tib. chab spel, tshe bstan phun tshogs]
Gender: Male
Age: ca. 71
Date of Birth: ca. 1921

Abstract

Chape [Tib. chab spel] was a Tibetan government lay official. In this interview, he discusses his work and how he received an order from the Kashag via the Garpön to recruit militia when the Chinese were on the banks of the Yangtze River in 1950, but the miser refused. He also describes how he became a school teacher in the first school set up in Shigatse in 1953. He discusses, critically, the views of the Sitsab, the conflict between the Tibetan government and Labrang, and what happened in Shigatse after the revolt in Lhasa.

Tape 1

Q: What work were you doing in 1951?

A: I was the dzongpön in Kyirong [Tib. skyid rong] Dzong in 1951. I had been there in 1949, 1950 and 1951. In the old society, Kyirong was considered far, and the roads were poor and there was no motor road. There weren't many visitors. During the winter, sheep sellers and pilgrims came through there, but otherwise there wasn't anybody, like officials, passing through and requiring the horse corvée. In this small place, I was like a king because Lhasa was far away.

Q: Were there one or two dzongpön?

A: There were two dzongpön, Ngambo Tsati [Tib. mngam po tsha sdi] and me. He was older and had already served as the Mayor of Lhasa, mipön. I was about 28-29.

Q: How old are you?

A: Now I am 70 years old .

Q: Did you stay in the dzong continuously?

A: I stayed in the dzong the entire time for the 3 years since it is so far that going back and forth was difficult because there were no vehicles.

Q: Probably, it took 15-20 days to get there?

A: It was about 8-9 days from Lhasa to Lhatse [Tib. lha rtse] where my main estate was located, and then about 12 more days from Lhatse to Kyirong. Altogether it was about 20 days.

Q: Did Kyirong belong to the Tibetan government?

A: The three dzongs; Nyalam [Tib. gnya' nang], Kyirong and Rongshar [Tib. rong shar] were part of the local (Tibetan) government. In Kyirong we heard almost no news from Tibet, but we did get some news via Nepal. We heard from Nepal the talk about the Chinese Communists coming to Tibet, but nothing definite or clear.

Kyirong administratively was considered under the Tö Garpön [Tib. stod sgar dpon] in Ngari [Tib. mnga' ris]. Everything from Latö [Tib. lwa stod] up was Ngari Korsum [Tib. mnga' ris skor gsum]. So when an edict went from the Kashag, it first went to Gartok [Tib.

sgar thog] and then it was resent to Kyirong. It took 3-4 months. So one day we received an edict from the Garpön. In it it said, "We have received an edict from the Kashag saying that the Chinese Communists are coming and we should stop the Chinese. So you have to make preparations to raise a militia in your area and all the people who can make war should join the militia. Make a list of all the men who are able to fight and send that to us, and get them ready to leave day or night to fight at a moment's notice. And one of the dzongpön also has to be ready to come with them at a moment's notice."

Q: Was this in 1950?

A: This was in 1950, probably before Chamdo fell. This was about the time that the Chinese troops reached the east bank of the Yangtze River. So we called a meeting at the dzong. My partner was about 60 years old and had bad legs, so he said you have to go with the militia, I can't do it. So I told him, "If we really have to go, there isn't any choice but for me to go. Since you are old, I will not say anything like we should draw lots or do a senriy lottery. You don't need to worry about this. But the Kyirong miser would not be able to go to the north to Garpön and fight way out there, it will just cause trouble to the misers and it will be useless." Anyway, since it was an order from the Garpön, we called a meeting anyway. Kyirong was divided into 9 gyatso subdivisions [Tib. brgya tsho], which was supposed to be groups of a hundred households in the past. Each was headed by a Dingpön.

So we called this meeting of the Dingpön and told them to announce the order. They did this and then said, "We can't go, we are villagers living in the lower valleys and don't know about making war. And Kyirong is a dzong on the border and we have no experience going as soldiers and there is no custom of Kyirong sending soldiers for the government. In the Gorkha War, since the war came right through our area we had to fight, but that was different. Normally, there was no custom of Kyirong going to serve as soldiers in any of the Tibetan regiments. We don't know whether it is because the government didn't trust us or we were too far and it would be useless, but there has been no custom of this. So if you have to send a report to the Tö Garpön, we will put our seals on it and send it to the Garpön. If you still insist, then the misers are very close to Nepal and they will flee across the border and they will not go to make war."

These people had small fields only and some did some trading across the border and some worked as porters carrying goods. There were a few well off families like the Dingpön but most were poor, working as porters, etc.

Q: Did these people have weapons?

A: No, they didn't have anything. In the order from the Garpön, it said that each families in the militia should bring whatever modern guns they had. If not, bring the Tibetan [matchlock] guns, swords and spears, and also bedding and your food. In the past, they used to call the militia like a tax. In reality, they were correct and couldn't go to fight, but we had been ordered to do this, so we had to say that this is not acceptable and they had to prepare to send militia because this is an important matter of the religion and we wouldn't dare report like this. If you can't send many, for the time being you have to send at least 20-30 from the better household who had horses to ride. But the Dingpön said "There is no way we can go and fight. If you say we must go to fight, it is like telling us not to stay here and we are not planning to go make war." They talked insistently like this.

But we said, "That's not acceptable. You 9 Dingpön have to go, there is no question about this. I have to go also because the older dzongpön is sick. And besides this, take down the names of who can go from the better families, and from each gyatso 2-3 riders should go." In the end they wrote a letter saying they can't send anyone, but we sent a letter with it to the Garpön saying despite this we are making preparations to send 30 militia. We sent this letter to the Tö Garpön.

Q: Did you send the letter through a rider?

A: We sent this through the dzong transport system [Tib. rdzong skyel]. It's called dzongkyel but it is usually more of someone passing the letter off on a traveler going to the next dzong rather than a regular mail service. It could take 2-3 months for the letter to get there and the same for a reply, so this was mostly just going through the motions.

Q: Who were the Garpön then?

A: The Garpön were Malamba [Tib. smar lam pa] and Trimön. Malamba was the one who [later] became the gadrung. Trimön is still alive. Actually, Nyalam, Kyirong and Rongshar were nearer to Shigatse, but they belonged to the Garpön as the governor [of Far West Tibet]. Our work was mostly to collect the taxes in grain in the fall. Then we would exchange it for salt in Dzonga [Tib. rdzong dga'], and then we would trade the salt for rice in Kyirong. This we sent in leather packages to the Laja to use in Mönlam. This was called the tribute [Tib. sgrig 'bul]. At this time, the year 1951 was beginning, and we heard through Nepal that the Dalai Lama had gone to Yadong and that he was going to go to India soon. My older partner said that there was no point sending the rice since we didn't know who would be there to eat it, so its best if we convert the rice into money and then send this wherever the Dalai Lama was. In the past, when the 13th Dalai Lama was living in Darjeeling, the border areas sent their taxes to him in Darjeeling. So we should do the same. We also decided that if we heard that the communists were in Lhasa and the Dalai Lama was in India, then we would go there also--wherever the Dalai Lama was. So there was no intention of fighting in Tö and we were saying this is like a story.

Then in 1951, in the fall, the Kashag sent a copy of the 17-Point Agreement to each dzong along with an edict saying that Tibet had signed this and you have to put this into practice. The book of the 17-Point Agreement was printed in China. It accompanied the edict. When I read this, it was in Tibetan, but there were many new terms so some we understood and some we didn't understand what the words meant. My partner said "I had bad eyes and have only a few years left, so you read it." I read it, and wondered what some of it meant. E.g. they are starting the Tibet Autonomous Region and the Military Administration Committee [Tib. dmag srid u yon lhan khang]. I had no idea what this meant. They were starting a new office but what did it really mean, I had no idea. What I did understand was about religious freedom, and the Dalai Lama and officials would be left, so regarding these it sounded not too bad. [laughter]

After we sent the letter to the Garpön, we never received a response to send soldiers or anything. Probably, at that time the [Chinese] soldiers might have arrived.

A: Tashi Tsering: They came through Xinjiang.

A: Yes, I heard that also. At the time of the revolt the Garpön changed and the two [new ones] were Parkang [Tib. par khang] Khenjung and Langdong [Tib. glang gdong].

Q: When did the soldiers come for the first time?

A: I heard that some soldiers came from Xinjiang. This was not in 1950-51. They just received the edict saying that there is a danger that the soldiers will come from Xinjiang. In 1952, in the 3rd Tibetan month, my work as dzongpön ended and I returned to Shigatse. I stayed in Lhatse for a while and then in the 5th Tibetan month, I went to Shigatse. In the 6th Tibetan month of 1952 the Panchen Lama arrived. When I arrived in Shigatse, the Chinese troops had already arrived and this was the first time I had seen Chinese troops.

In 1953, they started the first school in Shigatse. The first one in Tibet was the Seshin Labdra [Tib. zas zhim], and the second was in Shigatse. It was in the Gesar Lhakang [Tib. ge sar lha khang]. In the agreement, it said that schools should be set up in cooperation and the local government should support it. Zhang Jingwu and Zhang Guohua talked about this.

Q: Did they come to Shigatse?

A: The higher ones didn't come to Shigatse. There was a military officer called Political Commissar Miao [Ch. zheng wei, Tib. chab srid u yon]

Q: Is he still alive?

A: I don't know. All the Chinese officials in Shigatse wore army uniforms. And at this time, there were no Party Secretaries [Ch. shu ji] etc., just Political Commissars and Brigade Leaders [Ch. dui zhang]. The Shigtase Jidzong [Tib. spyi rdzong] and the Governor of Tsang, the Tsangji, were told to arrange lay officials who didn't have a position and who were staying in Shigatse to be teachers and to send their plan to the Kashag. My older brother was Lhamön Yeshe Tsültrim [Tib. lha smon ye shes tshul khriims], he returned with the Panchen Lama's entourage and was in Shigatse. I didn't have a job after the Kyirong Dzong [term ended], and he said you now have no work, so it would be good to become a teacher and teach Tibetan kids the Tibetan language. I thought I could do this teaching and I agreed. Other teachers were Dingja's [Tib. lding bya] magba, Nyelung Kelsang Dramdrü [Tib. snye lung skal bzang dgra 'dul] and I. We were the three from the government's side.

Q: Küngyurla [Tib. kun 'gyur lags] was also there, right?

A: She was not among the teachers. Also among the teachers there was Künsantse Yeshe Drölma [Tib. kun bzang rtse ye shes sgrol ma], she was the bride of the Shigatse Delerabten [Tib. bde legs rab brtan] family and there was Taring Longsela [Tib. phra ring klong gsal lags]. They volunteered to work. They were not government officials. And there were 5-6 from Tashilhunpo. So these were the teachers in the new Primary School in Shigatse. It opened in 1953.

Q: What about the People's Association? Was there one in Shigatse?

A: No. The reason was that Shigatse was where Panchen Lama was very strong. So there was no foundation for this. The Panchen Lama had come from China with the Chinese help, so in Shigatse the Panchen Lama was stronger than the Dalai Lama. The Panchen Lama set up a new revolutionary office called Nanggang Uyön Lhengang [Tib. nang sgang u yon lhan khang]. The Shigatse Dzong was under the control of the government. Under the Dzong were two tsodrag, Lhabju [Tib. lha phyug] and Ledrung Bisu [Tib. spel zur]. They declared themselves as the (people's) representatives of Tsang and went to Lhasa. Lhabju was one of the main leaders of the false People's Association. The person who took the petition to Zhang Jingwu was Lhabju. So they went to Lhasa as representatives to the People's Association. But in Shigatse, nothing like that occurred.

But when we were working as teachers, it was inconvenient for the Jidzong to block the school openly since that was covered by 17-Point Agreement. However, when we asked for more land, he was unhelpful and refused. The school was located next to the Gadang [Shigatse] Regiment [Headquarters]. The Gesar Lhakang was the near the Pangjagong [Tib. ch ?] which used to be the place where the Chinese soldiers stayed and that whole area was held by the Chinese at the time of the Ambans. Later, after the Chinese were expelled, the Gadang Regiment was located in that place. There were some incidents of [Tibetan] soldiers beating up the kids who went to the school, but not too badly. And they threw some rocks to break windows. At this time the two Shigatse Dzongpön were Muja [Tib. mu bya] and Jayangkyl Lobsang Gyentsen [Tib. 'jam dbyangs dkyil blo bzang rgyal mtshan]. The school leaders told the regiment to stop the soldiers from doing this.

After this, the Jidzong position was eliminated and these two officials were [just] called Shigatse Dzongpön, not Jidzong because they had also appointed a Tsangji. Then the Shigatse Dzongpön were Dosur [Tib. mdo zur] and Thubden Tsempe [Tib. thub bstan tshes 'phel]. In Shigatse the most influential force was Tashilhunpo. It was the Panchen Lama's residence so therefore, it welcomed the People's Liberation Army. There was still a big contradiction between the [Tibetan] government and the Labrang [the Panchen Lama's administration] and the Labrang now had risen and became equal due to the Chinese, so they only liked the Chinese.

Q: Did the Labrang openly propagandize on behalf of the Chinese saying do not cause trouble?

A: Not openly. But all the Chinese offices and the Nangmagang had a very close relation. So the miser of the Panchen followed the opinions of the Panchen, so there were no disturbances.

Q: How were the administrative duties divided between the Shigatse Dzong and the Nanggang Uyön Lhankang?

A: From the early times, the areas belonged to the government and the labrang was confirmed in the document. So they didn't interfere each other. And after the Chinese came, there were some new activities and institutions such as schools, then on these Labrang and government joined and decided them.

Q: Did the labrang sell the Chinese soldiers a lot of grain?

A: Yes. But from the government side, Lukhangwa blocked this. So both the government and the private people didn't sell the Chinese a lot of grain. Although Lukhangwa and others didn't say openly you can't sell grain to the Chinese, internally they pushed hard not to sell. Therefore, the People's Liberation Army had a very hard time at first in Tibet.

The Chinese in our school ate terrible food. They didn't know how to eat bag, so they took the tsamba we gave them and then boiled it and made momo, which turned black and became sticky to the hands, and they ate that along with boiled water. They ate like that for 1-2 years. We thought these people eat so poor yet work so hard. How is this possible? But in Tibet the Chinese in Shigatse were the best off since the Panchen helped the soldiers a lot. So even if the government refused to sell, the Panchen sold. It was the best area.

Q: Did the government sell grain in Shigatse?

A: After the two sitsab resigned, then the government sold the Chinese grain.

Q: Before that they didn't sell, right?

A: Yes, this was in 1953 or 54. Lukhangwa said, "Even though we weren't able to fight with weapons, we will starve them" [Tib. mtshon chas dmag rgag ma thub nas, ltogs bkag gdong gi yin zer]. People say he said this, but I don't know for sure.

Q: Did the government actually issue orders not to sell?

A: No. But the sitsab wrote letters to the dzongs and also through friends saying if you sell grain to the Chinese you are going against the government's wishes. So all people didn't dare to sell grain. But some people still sold grain to the Chinese, but most didn't sell.

Q: I heard that when the Dalai Lama was in Yadong, the two sitsab sent a petition to the Dalai Lama telling him to return to Lhasa?

A: I don't really know about the 2 sitsab. But, we just heard afterwards and saw that Lhautara wrote an article about a dispute between officials over this issue. Since Lhautara was a drunyichemmo he would know this. One group wanted the Dalai Lama to go to India. Another said if the Dalai Lama is separated from Tibet it isn't okay. They asked the Nechung Deity for a prophecy and then he said go to Lhasa, so they returned to Lhasa.

Q: What I don't understand is that after the return of the Dalai Lama, in the beginning, they were supposed to implement the 17-Point Agreement, but then all of sudden, the two sitsab said this is not okay. What was their goal and the plan for opposing the Chinese after losing the war?

A: At this time, with the exception of Surkhang who was little better in knowing the world situation, people like them didn't know much about the world. And moreover, the 2 sitsab were particularly conservative. They were trying to obstruct as much as possible and protect the Dalai Lama's system as much as possible. They had no interest in adhering to the 17-Point Agreement. But I think that except for wanting to show their dislike and anger, I don't think they really had any long term plan or goals for this strategy. Maybe they thought of bothering the Chinese like making them starve, so that they might have a hope for some changes in the international situation. Actually, they couldn't and handle the Chinese.

Q: I think that the Jenkhentsisum were encouraging them from India. Did any such connection come out in the struggle sessions [after 1959] and in your research, etc.?

A: I don't know if there were private letters passing between them. I wasn't in Lhasa and was teaching in school, so I don't know much really. I had no real contact with the government except at holidays and ceremonies to worship deities [Tib. lha gsol], after which we enjoy parties and playing mahjong. In principle, I was separated from the local government's work. I stayed in Shigatse until the uprising. I heard that Bumtang Drunyichemmo and Shölkang Tseja were the main advocates of the Dalai Lama returning to Lhasa. [They argued that you] Can't separate the Dalai Lama from Tibet or it's all over for Tibet. It would be like a fish separated from the water. The other faction said that we must go into exile because if we return it will be finished. I heard the Dalai Lama wanted to return. In Shigatse we heard about the trouble between the government and the labrang, but not much else. At the time of the 17-Point Agreement they couldn't settle all of the outstanding issues, so it was decided that the Panchen could return to Tibet and these issues would be settled afterwards.

Later, Labrang sent a representative to Lhasa, and there were discussions that took about 2-3 years and the outstanding issues were settled. Zhang Jingwu probably attended the final settlement session

Q: When did this start?

A: This began in 1953 and probably ended in 1955. There was also some fighting and tension between the Tashilhunpo monks and the Tibetan government soldiers. These issues were [rooted in] historical issues from the past. It was the stronger holding down the weaker and the weaker trying to rise up from under this. Actually, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama were said to be the master and the disciple, but since both had political power, the contradiction rose from this point. When the Panchen Lama fled to China, he stayed a long time and died there. Labrang took a loss and they then wanted compensation.

Q: Did they ever finally settle it?

A: It was settled, but not completely or to both sides' satisfaction. It was kind of half passed. It was as if they both were tired of arguing, so they just left it and it was not settled even at the time of the revolt.

Q: Tashi Tsering: If the revolt hadn't come, the dispute would have continued.

A: Yes, the contradiction would have continued, but the revolt mediated it.

Q: What did Labrang want? Was it autonomy?

A: No. In the past, the head of all the political power in Tibet was the Dalai Lama, but Tashilhunpo had its own territories and ruled over these. Because Tashilhunpo was weaker vis-a-vis Tibet, they felt they could increase in strength and influence if they sought support from the Chinese. Later, when the Panchen Lama went down to China, the Chinese didn't have any choice but to take care of him. They weren't looking for the autonomy but for some more special privileges so that they would not need to remain under the government very much. The government wanted to treat the Panchen like other Ling like Tsomönlung [Tib. tshe smon gling] etc., but Tashilhunpo refused this and wanted to be treated as higher than them.

Q: I heard that the Panchen Lama wanted the democratic reform early and that Fan Ming helped them. Tell us about this. What were the masses thinking?

A: In general, the local government didn't want reforms and they hoped not to have to do them at all. And if they had to have them, to prevent the reforms from starting as long as possible. Since the Panchen's Nangmagang and the Government had differences, the Panchen's side, in principle, wanted reforms as soon as possible since the reforms would give the Panchen and Dalai Lama equal status, and the government could not suppress them as they did then. Even the Kudrak of Labrang thought that with the reforms they would have equal status, e.g. a Labrang uyön would be the same rank as a government uyön.

As to what the misers thought, it's hard to say from both sides. Alo Chöndze and Lhabju said they were the representatives of the people and that they [the people] didn't want the reforms, but the people didn't know that and especially the farmers did not know what they were talking about. Normally the leaders also would say this is for the people. [laughter] but in general, the people had heavy taxes and shortages of food, and they all hoped the situation would improve and there would be better food and less taxes. They didn't understand the reforms, but what they wanted was some more tsamba and they said that it is hard to work when they were told to work without wages [corvée labor] and hoped this would come to an end.

Q: Did Shigatse start experimental reforms?

A: When the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region started in 1956, the Panchen gave a speech saying, "We will immediately start reforms in Shigatse." The government people didn't like this at all.

Q: Was this speech published in books?

A: Probably, it was. It was a famous speech. Because of this the contradiction between the government Labrang also became worse. Since the Panchen Lama had accepted this, the Tashilhunpo kudrak also said they were ready for reforms at once. As soon as the government said to do it, we were ready.

At this time, Tashilhunpo started doing some different things that the Tibetan government never did. For example, they reduced tax burdens a bit and gave interest free grain loans to the poor families. They were doing these according to the situation. So there were also a few experimental areas under Tashilhunpo, and moreover, some of Tashilhunpo's kudrak did the reforms on their own estates, letting the misers plant and harvest without taxes. But this was criticised by the Chinese as being fake reforms [Tib. bcos sgyur rdzus ma] so it didn't work out too good. But most were saying that we will do whatever all of the people do, but until then, we are going to wait.

Q: Did the Tibetan government make new rules and eliminate old debts via the Legjō Office? Did they really do that?

A: Yes, they did that for loans [taken] beyond a certain number of years and they exempted the taxes. Probably, this was after the peaceful liberation and before the reforms. They had tried this previous times in history, because when the loans became old, they couldn't pay it back and if you insisted on chasing for it, it would be hard for both the loan giver and taker. So at the time of the former Dalai Lamas, they also exempted the taxes and the loans. There were a lot of new offices started, but since I was studying in school I don't know their history too much. When the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region started, I got an order from the Kashag saying I was to become the secretary of the main office [Ch. ban gong shi] of the new Religion Committee [Tib. chos don u yon lhan khang]. I reported this to the head of the school and they said don't worry about it and don't go at once. The school then sent an appeal via the Branch Tibet Work Committee [Ch. fen gong wei]. And it sent the appeal to the United Front Ministry [Tib. 'thab phyogs gcig gyur Ch. bu], and they said I didn't have to go. At this time, the former Tsangji Mingyilinga [Tib. smon skyid gling] was then the head of the branch of the Judicial Office where disputes were settled [Tib. gyod zhib las khungs], and I sent him a letter explaining and asking whether the Kashag had really given permission for me not to come. He wrote back and said yes, you have been given permission to stay in Shigatse. So I stayed in Shigatse until 1965.

Q: Did the Chushigandru come to Shigatse?

A: There weren't anything in Tsang, but they came to Namling dzong [Tib. nam gling] at Ganden Chöngor Monastery where the Tibetan government had stored about 500-600 rifles, 4 cannons and much ammunition. The Khambas attempted to get this. The Chushigandru was mainly in cahoots with the leaders of the monastery and they kind of robbed them and the monastery kind of lost them. [laughter] When they implemented the reforms in Namling, I also went there.

Q: The main person in the monastery was Lingshar Pandenla [Tib. gling shardpal ldan lags] and I heard that he suffered a lot for this, right?

A: Lingshar Pandenla was the main one in charge of the monastery.

Q: When did this happen?

A: The taking of guns was in the summer of 1958 in the 7th month. Then they went to the north and carried these weapons to their main bases at Drigu [Tib. gri gu] in Lhoka. So in Tsang, all of the villages along the road that helped the Khambas were classified as having been involved in the revolt.

Q: Were there many Ganden Chöngor monks in the Chushigandru?

A: I don't think many, just a few.

Q: At the time the revolt started in Lhasa, what happened in Shigatse?

A: When the revolt took place in Lhasa, all of the postal communications were cut off and they made it so we couldn't hear anything from the local government.

Q: Probably this was banned by the Chinese government?

A: Probably. Quietly and privately there was talk that there was a revolt in Lhasa. In Shigatse for the first 4 days of the revolt, we didn't know anything. Then one day when we got up we saw the People's Liberation Army troops all along the hill in back of Tashilhunpo and they also were surrounding the Gadang Regiments Headquarters. Then the Chinese told the dzongpön and depön that it would be best if you surrender. If you try to cause trouble it will be bad. You (the Gadang Regiment) have to turn over all your guns and ammunition. The Chinese officials called them and told them this. We didn't know what was going on at the time. We then learned that Phagpala [Tib. 'phags pa lha] had been killed and that there had been a revolt.

Q: Weren't there foreign radios?

A: No. Only a few big kudraks had radios called Philips, but we didn't have any. The Chinese called the two dzongpön and the Gadang Depön Numa. The dzongpön didn't say anything and the depön agreed and turned over arms and guaranteed that there would be no disturbance. So there was no fighting at all and all the soldiers were just confused.

Q: How many soldiers were there?

A: There were about 600-700 soldiers in the regiment at that time. Their bullets were still in the storeroom. They didn't know anything and didn't have time to distribute them. I heard that a few gyagpön had started to take out the guns and bullets and implied they would fight, but nothing came of it as Numa said it makes no sense to try and fight and lose many lives, it is better to surrender. After they got the weapons of the regiment, the soldiers on the hill withdrew as the monastery wasn't going to fight, so there was no trouble.

Q: Did Tashilhunpo's monastic officials [Tib. las sne] etc. get arrested and did they hold struggle sessions?

A: A few were in the prison, but most were not. The Chinese had the two policies, one is the three antis and two exemptions [Tib. ngo rgol gsum dang chag yang gnyis] and the other one was the two antis and two exemptions, and wherever the revolt took place there was the third anti which was against revolt. So shigatse was not for the three antis but the two antis, that is, anti feudal exploitation, and probably anti the high interest loans and the two exemptions. In the two anti-areas, there were fewer arrests. If an area was even a little involved it was classified as a 3 anti-place. After the revolt, in Tashilhunpo, there was a class differentiation and they held struggle sessions. But there were just a few who were imprisoned who were said to be involved in politics. Some were said to be related to spying for the Guomindang spy and for spying for the English. If a ngadag wasn't involved in politics, they held struggle sessions and made them undergo a few months detention in study sessions, and then they would send them home. Later, for those not involved in the revolt, there was the Redeeming Policy [Tib. blu nyo'i srid jus] which gave back money for their houses and lands [that were confiscated, but this was much, much later]. However, those in the revolt had everything confiscated. But there weren't nearly as many bad things done there as were done in Lhasa. When they implemented the reform, they also were class struggles [Tib. gral rim 'thab rtsod].

Q: When looking back, what do you think was the main cause of why the 17-Point Agreement sounded okay [in 1951] and ended up the way it did in 1959?

A: The main thing is that the two had totally different systems. So there was no way they could coexist for a long time. But it was the way of politics that it should be done slowly like a religious dance, but eventually they were doomed to end up in conflict and this was unavoidable. In all of China, the reforms were over, but in Tibet it was confirmed in the 17-Point Agreement that the reforms would be done and the local government didn't have any choice but to accept it. But the local Tibetan Government was trying to delay and postpone reforms as long as it could, and in reality they created the conditions where they speed it up. If they left it like that, the Chinese didn't have any choice but to leave it for quite a long time. And China declared in 1956 that during this 5-year plan they would postpone reforms, and in the next 5-year plan, they would look at the wishes of the leaders and the Tibetan people. So, if you look at that, it looked as if there would be no reforms for quite a long time. So I think it was only a question of time. It was only a matter of how quickly the reforms would occur, not whether they would, and there was no way for Tibet to avoid the reforms. So if there was no revolt, it would have spared many lost lives, but ultimately there would have been changes. And in the end, the reforms forced the changes earlier than even China had planned on.

Q: Some say that if the Tibetans worked for themselves it would have been okay, but that it was the coming of the Khambas that

created the situation leading up to the revolt? I heard that if they hadn't done the reforms in Kham, there would have been a different situation in Tibet.

A: That is not certain. Actually, the Central Committee thought a lot about how to do the reforms in Tibet, e.g., in Tibet they made a difference between those in the revolt and those not, and gave those not the Redeeming Policy whereas in China they did not make this difference. Looking at this, if Tibet had no uprising, and had gradually and peacefully implemented the reforms, it is possible that China would have made a special, more lenient, policy in Tibet.

As for the Khambas, their causing the uprising was just a coincidence of two events. Really they didn't cause it. The real cause of the revolt was the local government. So as for the Khambas coming to Tibet, the Tibetan government could have stopped them if they wanted to. The government internally welcomed the arrival of the Khambas. The Tibetan government could have put them down if they wanted. It happened like the saying, "The enemy couldn't estimate one's enemy" [Tib. dgra tshod dgras ma lon pa]. I think that they thought that if there were some disturbances internally and if there was a bit of external help, they could postpone reforms for a long time. I'm not sure if this was their strategy, but this is my guess. The Chinese knew clearly the Khambas were going into Tibet and that they were going to cause trouble, but even though they could have taken care of the problem and stopped them, they did nothing. So I am wondering what the Central Committee was thinking. The Tibetan government and the Central Committee, both sides, didn't stop them. Each side had their own strategy. So in the end it made for faster reforms.

Q: Who could have made the decision to stop the Khambas?

A: It wasn't just one or two people. Basically, under the same system, they [Khambas and the government] had the same benefit. So their thought also became unified. So even if there were a few who wanted to stop the Khambas, most did not and so those few would have had to go along with the majority. At this time, the land owners and the people who had the power were mostly unified in thought.

Q: If they wanted to send the soldiers, the Dalai Lama had the power, right?

A: If they were going to stop the Khambas, the way would have had to have been, first the for Kashag to discuss it and then make a recommendation which would have been taken to the Dalai Lama. But there was no recommendation up and nothing said down. So both sides were making some excuses. The government said for a long time that the Khambas wouldn't listen as if they were totally separate, but when the revolt arose, Chushigandru became kind of unified with the government. And Zhongyang also didn't stop the Khambas. They put the responsibility on the Tibetan government and told them the Khambas are causing disturbance so you have to take the responsibility. This was also a method of politics. Both sides had strategies, but they didn't work and led to loss. This is what I thought.

Q: There is a talk in the West that Trijang Rimpoché [Tib. khri byang rin po che] and Surkhang incited the Khambas to revolt when they came back from China. Is this true?

A: After the revolt was quelled, I just saw in the documents regarding the revolt that it was written that Gyawa Karmapa [Tib. rgyal ba kar ma pa] and Trijang Rimpoché each took a different part and mobilized the revolts in Kham. At the time, I knew nothing at all about this. Each lama is from a different sect so they could have gone to their respective sect's monasteries. So whether they had mobilized or not they might have come through that route.

Q: Tashi Tsering: When they do the political propaganda, they would tell a lot of lies, right?

A: But there should be a little bit of basis for that.

Q: In the west, there is some talk that the Chinese said the Dalai Lama shouldn't take his bodyguards when he was invited to the show. Now some think that if the Chinese military really wanted to take the Dalai Lama to China by force, then even if there were 20-30 bodyguards, it wouldn't have prevented them doing so. So maybe this whole thing was invented by the Dalai Lama's people to create a reason for him to leave?

A: The person doing the arrangements wasn't Phüntso Tashi, it was the Acting Jigyab Khembo Gadrang [Tib. dga' brang]. In the document, it said Gadrang was doing the arrangements. It is clear that the story that the Chinese wanted to take the Dalai Lama to China was a rumor. In the Dalai Lama's own hand written letters it was written that they have made the disturbances and so on.